NATIONAL EVIDENCE AWARDS 2026

Recognising Excellence in the Use of Routine Data and Research for Decision-making in Government

Overview

The Institute for Development (IfD) proudly launches the National Evidence Award 2026, celebrating national government ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) that have demonstrated outstanding use of routine data analysis and research evidence to inform decisions, shape policy, and improve results.

This award is part of IfD's mission to build a culture of evidence-informed governance in Sierra Leone, where data and research are consistently used to guide planning, budgeting, and implementation.

Total Prize Fund: USD 5,000

- 1st Place: USD 2,500
- 2nd Place: USD 1,500
- 3rd Place: USD 1,000

Purpose

The Award recognises practical, real-world examples of how national government entities have:

- Used routine administrative data (e.g. DHIS2, EMIS, IFMIS, HR data, or sector dashboards) and/or
- Applied research findings or evaluations to improve policies, resource allocation, or service delivery.

The goal is to spotlight and reward leadership and systems that embed evidence into national decision-making.

Eligibility

- Open to national-level MDAs of the Government of Sierra Leone.
- Entries must describe a policy, reform, or management decision implemented between January 2022 and December 2025.

- The initiative must demonstrate clear use of routine data and/or research in informing the decision.
- Joint submissions with technical or donor partners are allowed — but the lead applicant must be a national government MDA.

Award Criteria (100 Points Total)

Criterion	Description	Weight
Use of routine data or research	Clear, credible use of administrative data or research to inform a specific decision or policy.	30
Decision-making impact	Evidence of an actual change — policy shift, resource reallocation, or operational improvement.	25
Quality and transparency of analysis	Soundness of methods, documentation, and accessibility of evidence used.	20
Institutionalisation and sustainability	Evidence use is now embedded or influencing standard processes for example meeting templates that make reference to evidence review.	15
Collaboration and learning	Demonstrated teamwork between technical units, decision-makers, and partners.	10

Examples of Eligible Entries

- The Ministry of Health using DHIS2 data to target a campaign.
- The Ministry of Basic Education using EMIS data to revise teacher deployment.
- The Ministry of Agriculture using research to inform seed distribution strategies.
- The Ministry of Finance using IFMIS data to improve expenditure efficiency.
- The Ministry of Gender using national survey data to design protection services.

Application Process

Step 1: Call for Entries

- Entries submitted via:

1. Email to rmyillah@ifdsl.org
2. WhatsApp to +44 7539 819282

3. Hard copies - please call Mr Emmanuel Foray: +078 455521/ Mr Issa Kanu: 088 508855

- Deadline: Monday 12th January 2026 (Applications clinics offered to all applicants and applications may be revised during this period)

Step 2: Required Materials

Each submission must include:

1. Completed application form (provided by IfD)
2. Summary (max 500 words) of the decision or policy area
3. Description of the data or research used (sources, how analysed, how applied)
4. Results achieved and lessons learned (max 1,000 words)
5. Supporting documentation (e.g. reports, dashboards, memos, policy documents)
6. Letter of endorsement from the Permanent Secretary or Director-General

Selection Process

Stage	Description	Lead Responsibility	Timeline
1. Screening	Check eligibility and completeness.	IfD Secretariat	Mon 19th Jan
2. Technical Review	Independent reviewers score entries using award criteria.	Independent Review Panel	Mon 2nd Feb
3. Panel Deliberation	Panel reviews top five entries and selects 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place.	Judging Panel	Mon 9th Feb
4. Awards Ceremony	Winners announced at the National Evidence Summit 2026.	IfD	24-26 February

Award Panel

The National Evidence Award Panel will comprise national and international representatives to ensure credibility and fairness.

Proposed Composition (7–9 members):

1. Chair: Cabinet Secretariat (TBC)
2. Statistics Sierra Leone
3. Ministry of Planning and Economic Development

4. Institute for Development (IfD) – Secretariat
5. International donor agency representative (e.g. FCDO, Irish Aid, IDRC)
6. International evidence organisation in Africa (e.g. Africa Evidence Network,
7. International evidence organisation (e.g. ODI, 3ie, Campbell Collaboration)
8. Academic or research institution (University of Sierra Leone, Njala University)
9. Civil society or media representative (optional for transparency)

All panel members will sign a confidentiality and conflict-of-interest declaration.

Recognition and Benefits

- Cash Prizes
    - 1st Place – USD 2,500
    - 2nd Place – USD 1,500
    - 3rd Place – USD 1,000
- 'Highly Commended@ certificates for strong entries that didn't place in the top three.
- Certificate of Excellence presented by senior government and donor representatives.
- National recognition at the National Evidence Summit, 24-26 Feb 2026.
- Feature profile on Sabi Salone and inclusion in the National Evidence Compendium.
- Peer learning opportunity — top three MDAs will be invited to share their approach at the National Evidence Learning Roundtable at NES 2026.

Timeline

Activity	Timeline
Finalise framework	November 2025
Launch call for entries	December 2025
Finalise panel members	December 2025
Submission deadline	12th January 2026

Screening & review	19th January 2026
Panel deliberation	9th February 2026
Award presentation (NES 2026)	24-26 February 2026

Post-Award Learning

IfD will produce a short Evidence Insight Brief for each of the three winners, documenting:

- The data or research used,
- How it informed decision-making, and
- The impact or outcome achieved.

These briefs will be published on Sabi Salone and shared with ministries, donors, and universities to encourage replication of best practice.

IfD will also create a public repository of all submissions (with permission) so that MDAs can learn from each other.